

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (original): In an optical communication transmitter system, a method for superimposing utility data on an optical signal, said method comprising:
receiving utility data from a utility data source;
spreading said utility data according to a spreading code to generate a spread spectrum signal; and
modulating said optical signal with a combination of said spread spectrum signal and a signal carrying payload data.

Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein modulating comprises:
adding said spread spectrum signal to said payload data signal to form a modulation signal; and
applying said modulation signal to input of an optical modulator that modulates said optical signal.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein modulating comprises:
adding said spread spectrum signal to said payload data signal to form a modulation signal; and
driving a laser using said modulation signal so that said laser outputs said optical signal modulated with both said payload data and said utility data.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein modulating comprises:
driving a laser using said spread spectrum signal;
modulating output of said laser using said payload data signal.

Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein said utility data comprises a signal strength indication.

Claim 6 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein said utility data comprises firmware.

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 1 further comprising:
outputting a modulated optical signal wherein modulation due to said payload data and modulation due to said utility data overlap spectrally.

Claim 8 (original): In an optical communication receiver, a method for recovering utility data from an optical signal, said method comprising:

accepting as input an optical signal modulated with payload data and said utility data;
multiplying an electrical signal derived from said optical signal by a spreading sequence to recover said utility data, said electrical signal carrying both said payload data and said utility data; and
recovering said payload data from said optical signal.

Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 8 wherein in a spectrum of said optical signal as input, modulation due to said utility data and modulation due to said payload data overlap in the frequency domain.

Claim 10 (original): The method of claim 8 wherein said utility data comprises a signal strength indication.

Claim 11 (original): The method of claim 8 wherein said utility data comprises firmware.

Claim 12 (currently amended): In an optical communication transmitter system, apparatus for superimposing utility data on an optical signal, said ~~method~~ apparatus comprising:
means for receiving utility data from a utility data source;
means for spreading said utility data according to a spreading code to generate a spread spectrum signal; and

means for modulating said optical signal with a combination of said spread spectrum signal and a signal carrying payload data.

Claim 13 (original): The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said modulating means comprises:

means for adding said spread spectrum signal to said payload data signal to form a modulation signal; and

means for applying said modulation signal to input of an optical modulator that modulates said optical signal.

Claim 14 (original): The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said modulating means comprises:

means for adding said spread spectrum signal to said payload data signal to form a modulation signal; and

means for driving a laser using said modulation signal so that said laser outputs said optical signal modulated with both said payload data and said utility data.

Claim 15 (original): The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said modulating means comprises:

means for driving a laser using said spread spectrum signal;

means for modulating output of said laser using said payload data signal.

Claim 16 (original): The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said utility data comprises a signal strength indication.

Claim 17 (original): The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said utility data comprises firmware.

Claim 18 (original): The apparatus of claim 12 further comprising:

means for outputting a modulated optical signal wherein modulation due to said payload data and modulation due to said utility data overlap spectrally.

Claim 19 (original): In an optical communication receiver, apparatus for recovering utility data from an optical signal, said apparatus comprising:

means for accepting as input an optical signal modulated with payload data and said utility data;

means for multiplying an electrical signal derived from said optical signal by a spreading sequence to recover said utility data, said electrical signal carrying both said payload data and said utility data; and

means for recovering said payload data from said optical signal.

Claim 20 (original): The apparatus of claim 19 wherein in a spectrum of said optical signal as input, modulation due to said utility data and modulation due to said payload data overlap in the frequency domain.

Claim 21 (original): The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said utility data comprises a signal strength indication.

Claim 22 (original): The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said utility data comprises firmware.

Claim 23 (original): In an optical communication transmitter system, apparatus for superimposing utility data on an optical signal, said apparatus comprising:

a spread spectrum processing block that spreads said utility data using a spreading sequence to generate a spread spectrum signal; and

a modulation system that modulates said optical signal using both said payload data and said utility data as spread by said spread spectrum processing block.

Claim 24 (original): The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said modulation system comprises:

a summer that adds said spread spectrum signal to said payload data to form a modulation signal; and
an optical modulator that modulates said optical signal responsive to said modulation signal.

Claim 25 (original): The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said modulation system comprises:

a summer that adds said spread spectrum signal to said payload data to form a modulation signal; and
wherein a laser is driven using said modulation signal so that said laser outputs said optical signal modulated with both said payload data and said utility data.

Claim 26 (original): The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said modulation system comprises:

an optical modulator that modulates output of a laser using said payload data signal; and
wherein said laser is driven using said spread spectrum signal.

Claim 27 (original): The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said utility data comprises a signal strength indication.

Claim 28 (original): The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said utility data comprises firmware.

Claim 29 (original): The apparatus of claim 23 further wherein modulation imposed on said optical signal due to said payload data and modulation imposed on said optical signal due to said utility data overlap spectrally.

Claim 30 (currently amended): In an optical communication receiver, apparatus for recovering utility data from an optical signal, said apparatus comprising:

an input that accepts an said optical signal modulated with payload data and said utility data ;

a spread spectrum processing block that uses a spreading sequence to recover said utility data from an electrical signal derived from said optical signal.

Claim 31 (original): The apparatus of claim 30 wherein in a spectrum of said optical signal as input, modulation due to said utility data and modulation due to said payload data overlap in the frequency domain.

Claim 32 (original): The apparatus of claim 30 wherein said utility data comprises a signal strength indication.

Claim 33 (original): The apparatus of claim 30 wherein said utility data comprises firmware.